

Leyla Weighs In: Want to get happy? Eat your veggies!



Might increasing vegetable intake increase happiness? According to a recent study, yes.

We know the physical health benefits of eating more vegetables and fruits (like prevention of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer), but a growing body of evidence has revealed that it may promote psychological well-being too—and that plays a role in promoting overall health.

In investigating a hypothesis that *increased vegetable consumption might increase happiness scores*, researchers undertook a randomized controlled trial to assess changes in Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) scores in response to recommended vegetable intake as outlined in the 2010-2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).

The participants from Grand Forks, North Dakota, were 75 men and women aged 18 to 65 with BMIs equal to or greater than 25 (indicating overweight status) and with known low habitual vegetable consumption.

The vegetable intervention in this trial consisted of an eight-week feeding phase during which participants were provided a provision of vegetables to choose from

consistent with advice from the DGA in terms of types (dark green, orange and red, starchy) and serving amounts. The preparation of these vegetables was left up to the participants. Compliance was monitored by weekly questionnaires and skin carotenoid scans. The control group completed the same testing schedule but was not provided any vegetables or guidelines. Happiness scores were assessed before and after the 8-week intervention.

What the researchers found was that at week eight, greater mean SHS scores were reached than at baseline, suggesting that adhering to DGA vegetable intake guidance may help promote psychological well-being. With regard to the control group, no such increase in mean happiness scores was observed.

Of note is that these results add to a wider body of research that suggests differential and greater effects on psychological well-being from vegetables compared to fruit.

To your health!

Leyla Muedin, MS, RD, CDN